

Section 1

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1A

Introduction

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PURPOSE

Forest Plan Revision

Forest plans are revised every 10 to 15 years for the Forest Service to incorporate changes in the natural environment, new scientific understandings, social trends, and new laws and policies. This requirement was established in the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, which created the need to prepare and periodically revise land management plans, and in the National Forest Management Act of 1976, which required that each national forest and grassland complete and periodically update a management plan.



As the existing plans for the Dixie, Fishlake, and Manti-La Sal National Forests were completed in 1986, these forests are currently revising their forest plans. Since their plans are being revised on a similar timeline and the areas they cover are geographically connected, the Forest Service staff is coordinating their social-economic assessments into one.

The Forest Service faces a very difficult situation in revising their forest plans. They must attempt to find a balance between the various interests of its diverse constituent base (the American public), while complying with the many federal laws that guide its actions. In tandem, the Forest Service must assure that the land and resources are capable of accommodating these expectations.

Assessments: Understanding the Current Management Situation

One of the first tasks of the forest plan revision process is to inventory and assess relevant information on current conditions to help the Forest Service understand their management challenges. Through this, the Forest Service brings the best information and science into its management decisions and practices. A social and economic assessment is one of these required assessments.

Understanding the economy and society that surround a forest is essential to its management. A primary goal of this assessment was to promote a greater understanding of how Forest Service decisions and actions affect local communities and others who use the forest. Conversely, it attempts to help these people understand how they affect forest lands. A second goal of this assessment is to involve people more closely in forest planning and to encourage collaborative planning that can ultimately help resolve many of these shared challenges. As the social and economic assessment relies on input from people connected to the forest, this study was a natural opportunity to involve people more closely in the forest plan revision.

The Importance of Social and Economic Assessment

Environments shape their economies and are significant forces in community structure and well-being. Equally, social and economic uses and trends can have serious positive or negative impacts on a given environment. Economic, social, and environmental sustainability are interdependent goals for forest management, yet the Forest Service has traditionally

focused primarily on environmental factors. As human uses and impacts have grown, it has become evident that forest management goals cannot be achieved without understanding economic and social factors, too.

Many of the most difficult and contentious issues and challenges facing the Forest Service today involve the social and economic interests of people. Exploding development and recreational uses in recent years have raised forest use to new levels and heightened management challenges. People are reaching further into the forest and the visible effects of this, such as fire damage, avalanche, watershed impacts, have brought public attention to the condition of the forests. Public scrutiny of resource management practices and our changing environment have also heightened awareness of National Forests and their operations.

It is obvious that people are an integral part of nearly everything that occurs on Forest lands. Human interaction with forest lands and as well as other users must be considered on equal terms with the biological and physical aspects of forests. This social and economic assessment attempts to shed light on these interactions and help the Forest Service, as well as its forest users and stakeholders, see how people are a part of the management picture.

APPROACH

Participants

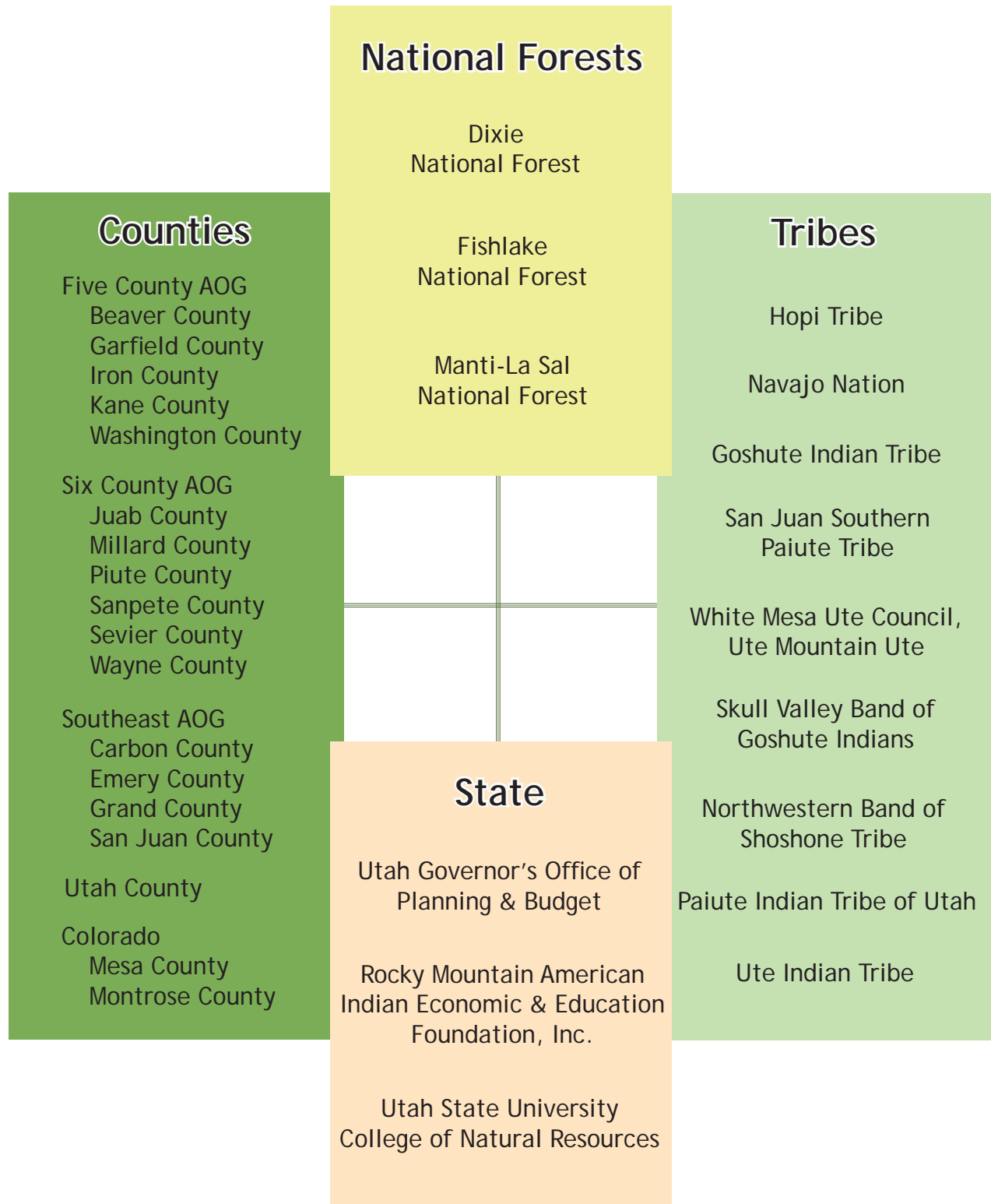
The Forest Service frequently consults and cooperates with other agencies and governments that have relevant expertise or legal jurisdiction. Cooperative agreements are frequently written to formalize these contributions. Input is also solicited from the general public.

Decisions by the federal government, the State of Utah, American Indian tribes or local governments affect similar decisions by the others. These different parties recognized that collaborating in this forest plan revision could develop consistent information without duplication that could be incorporated into any county, tribe, state, or Forest Service planning document.

As the Dixie, Fishlake, and Manti-La Sal National Forests designed their forest plan revision process, they developed a partnership with State of Utah, who had an equal stake in the process and relevant skills and knowledge to contribute. The Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) accepted a leadership role in preparing this social-economic assessment through a *Challenge Cost-share Agreement*. In turn, GOPB invited the Utah Division of Indian Affairs and the Natural Resource and Environmental Policy Program in the College of Natural Resources at Utah State University (USU) to join the partnership and contribute their skills with tribal relations and social research, respectively. This collective group is referred to throughout this document as "the team" or "the GOPB Team."

The Forest Service also established cooperative agreements with communities near the Forest through either their county government or Associations of Government (AOGs). These partners represent the primary governing agencies of the study area, which encompasses 16 counties in Utah, 2 counties in Colorado and 6 American Indian tribes. The study area covers nearly two-thirds of the state of Utah—almost 54,000 square miles, including over 7,000 square miles of National Forest System lands. The parties involved and their geographic jurisdictions are shown in the Study Area figure to the right. Through these partnerships, this assessment was able to take advantage of existing relationships, resources and expertise.

Project Participants



Assessment Goals

The first task of the team was developing an approach for conducting this social and economic assessment. Paying particular attention to how the resulting information was used in forest plans, the team reviewed a variety of documents to understand the typical assessment method and then searched for more innovative approaches. The team also held discussions with Forest Service staff, academics, and met with state, local, tribal and other interested parties to better understand what would make this assessment useful. A review of this process can be found in *Appendix A1—Background to Forest Plan Revision*.

From this, the team learned that many previous assessments produced a lot of data, but weren't always helpful for making decisions. They were also more rigid—setting output targets and goals, but without outlining how they would be achieved. The assessments also were more focused on the product—the document—than on the process and the people involved. In response to the shortcomings of past plans as well as many thoughts for the potential of this current plan, goals for a useful assessment were identified. The assessment should:

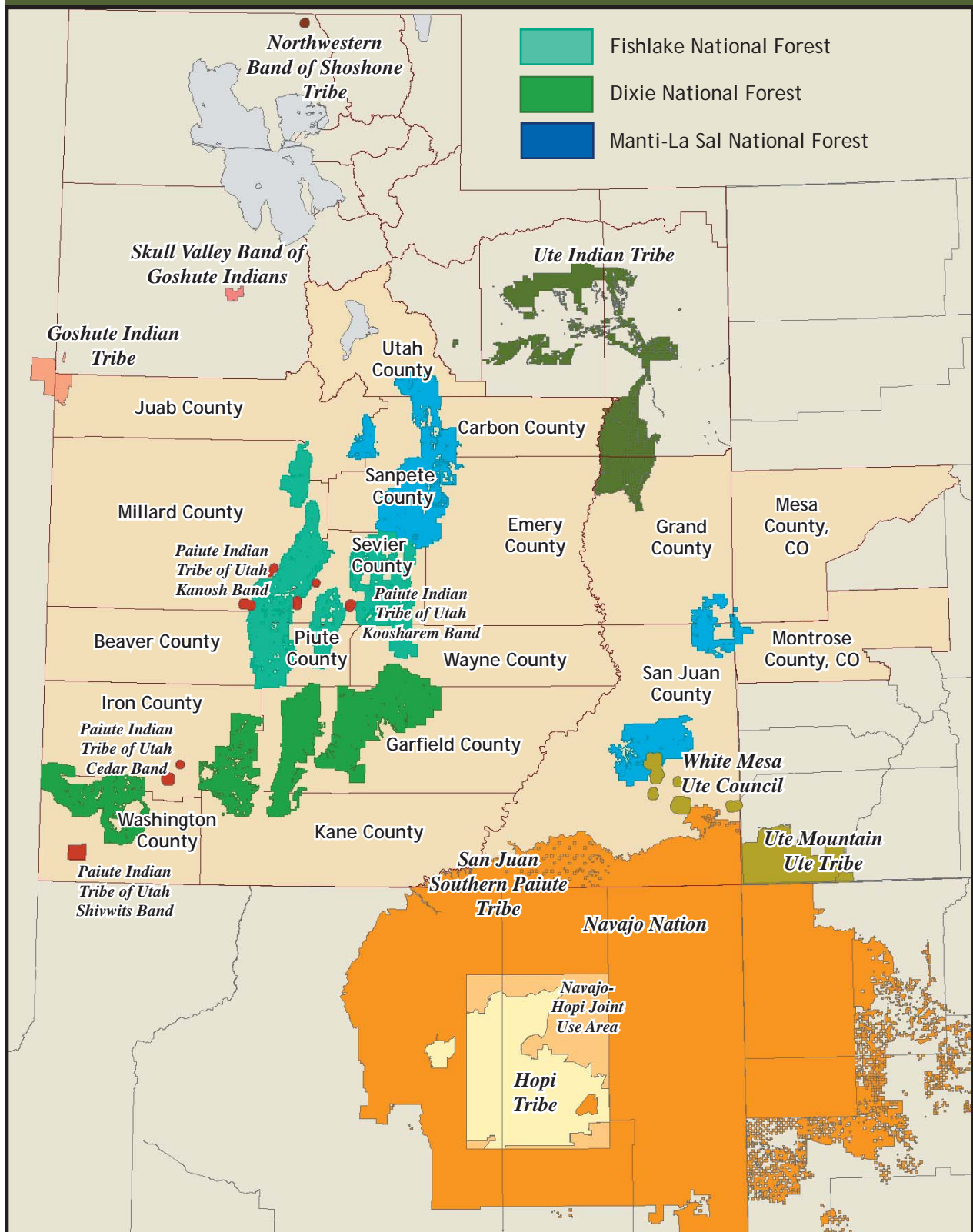
- Tie social and economic dimensions to the biological and physical aspects of the environment.
- Help the Forest Service identify relevant stakeholders, understand their expectations, and communicate better with them.
- Help people to 'see themselves' in the assessment, so people can see how their concerns are considered, but within the context of other management challenges facing the Forest Service.
- Be framed within the current legal and policy situation and help people understand these constraints.
- Focus on the most important questions, data, and analysis relevant to these three Forests.
- Be useful for assessing impacts and evaluating alternatives.
- Provide guidance for implementing the revised forest plans and for future planning and decision-making.

A New Approach

From the outset, this study strived to go beyond the traditional economic and demographic “snapshot” of a place at one moment in time. While this information was collected, it is most useful as a tool for shared understanding than as a basis for recommending decisions. This assessment goes a step further by creating a new approach to understanding the ways in which people are connected to the forests, and also by establishing new ways to involve them.

The “Linkages to Public Land” framework is a new approach for identifying and evaluating the wide variety of social and economic *linkages* that people and communities have to the forests. These linkages in turn, drive and shape many of the issues and uses that impact the forests. This perspective enhances understanding of the *nature* of people's concerns,

Study Area



making it clearer how decisions will involve or affect them. With this approach, this assessment also proposes a new way of shaping and analyzing the forest plan.

This assessment also involved various stakeholders in its creation in order to make it more meaningful. It also took a collaborative approach. It was hoped that this would engage stakeholders from a personal perspective and encourage them to continue in the forest planning process.

Thus the assessment goals above were addressed by:

1. Creating a collaborative assessment team representing different perspectives and expertise, including:
 - planning and economic-demographics (GOPB);
 - social science interests (USU);
 - tribal-specific (UDIA);
 - local communities (Counties and AOGs)
 - forest-specific (Forest Service); and
 - relevant expertise (Technical Review Committee).
2. Taking a collaborative approach to public involvement, by:
 - hosting region-wide and county-specific collaborative workshops;
 - participating in Forest Service collaborative workshops for the Forest Plan Revision and Topical Work Groups (TWiGs); and
 - preparing stakeholders to participate in future collaborative efforts.
3. Recognizing the conceptual nature of an assessment at the forest level, by:
 - portraying the general context for entire forests; and
 - recommending ways to approach the human dimension on future, project-specific decisions where research can be more targeted and meaningful.
4. Developing a linkage framework for approaching social-economic issues, which:
 - recognizes that the connections go both directions—people are linked to the forest, and the forest is linked to these people;
 - considers people by how they are linked to the forests, not just who they are;
 - includes both local and non-local communities;
 - integrates social *and* economic concerns; and
 - sets a method for tackling future decisions and targeted research that is well-suited for adaptive management.
5. Displaying social and economic trends for the region and state, as well as the economic connection between forests and neighboring communities through:
 - demographic and economic profiles of each county, tribe, and forest as well as the state; and
 - economic-demographic modeling capable of analyzing more variables from a broader economic perspective than past input-output models.



Social and economic issues were discussed in context with forest management at numerous collaborative workshops.

6. Using readily available and relevant sources of information, including:
- economic/demographic indicators that are updated regularly;
 - planning documents and other publications of each county, tribe, and forest as well as the state.
 - forest plan revision public meetings;
 - social-economic assessments conducted by the BLM for this region;
 - INFRA database of the Forest Service; and
 - the Internet;

Using these approaches, an inclusive process and comprehensive product were established. This assessment presents a new way to evaluate social and economic issues, highlights some of the most prominent issues and trends, and engages the people who are most affected by forest management in efforts to find solutions.

The Linkages to Public Lands Approach

The “Linkages to Public Land” (“Linkages”) framework is an effort to identify, analyze, and categorize the many ways in which people are connected to public lands. In this framework, linkages are defined by the type of relationship people have with the land. This is different than typical approaches that categorize people by their relationship to one another, (such as common interests or locations), or by the resources to which people are linked. These linkages fall into six basic categories:

- Uses (including economic) Linkages,
- Interest Linkages,
- Decision-Making Linkages,
- Neighboring Land Linkages,
- and American Indian Linkages.

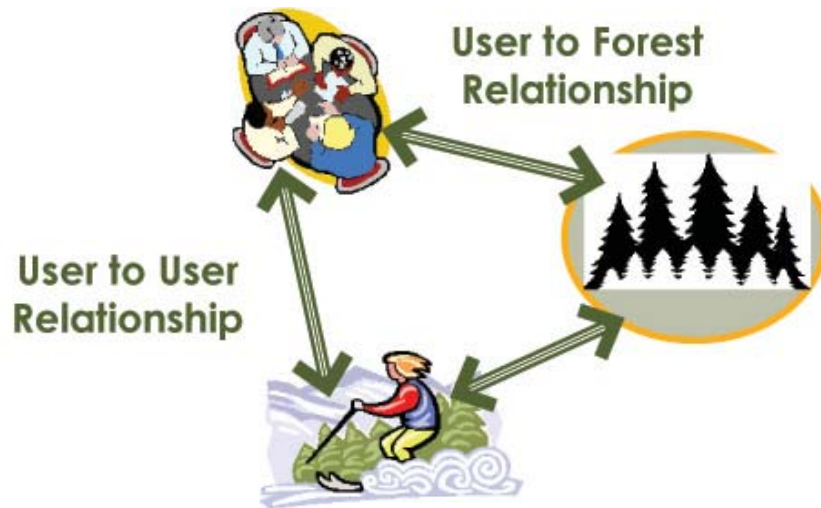
Many people, particularly local residents, are linked to these forests in several different, often overlapping ways. Thus, the broad and deep linkages of people who utilize the forests most are highlighted without elevating any single interest or group. The Linkages approach

also takes into account various social scales, from individuals, to groups, to government agencies. It also establishes a new way of identifying and focusing on stakeholders that would like to be involved in decisions.

People derive different benefits and assume different responsibilities based on their linkages to the forests. The way in which people are linked to the forest shapes their actions and their ability to act. Knowing these linkages also illuminates how forests have evolved historically and how strategies can be developed for future management. The Forest Service is mandated to manage the relationship between people and the land. But in order to accomplish their



goals, they also often need to manage relationships between different groups of people with diverse interests and needs. Understanding these linkages helps people see their own linkages to the Forests in relation to other people's linkages to these forests. This is important in helping people work together toward a shared future vision for these forests.



Because these linkages are endlessly changing, just like the forests themselves, a framework for understanding them is as important as this assessment derived from it. Thus, this assessment is more than a study—the framework and approach are a “tool” for ongoing social and economic analysis. The framework and its application are further explained in *1B—Linkages to Public Land Framework*.

OVERVIEW

Overview of the “People and the Forests” Assessment Package

This social-economic assessment is organized by a “Linkages to the Land” concept. These linkages emphasize ways in which people interact with these three forests and are an integral part of its management. Thus, a second thread throughout this document is the collaborative approach to planning that is essential to success. These two topics are discussed in more detail in *Section 3—Conclusions*.

This package is not intended to be read from cover-to-cover. Instead it is organized like a toolkit of information, a reference for further action. This *Introduction* maps out the whole assessment package and explains the reasoning and framework for developing it as it is. *Section 2—Findings* summarizes the findings of this assessment—issues, challenges, perspectives, and visions for the future. *Section 3—Conclusions* section summarized the different perspectives revealed in this conclusions and proposes recommendations for accommodating them. *Section 4—Profiles* section is an encyclopedia of information (economic and demographic trends, planning efforts, and maps of the natural and political landscape) on each of the counties, tribes and forests that participated in this process. Finally, the *Appendix* contains detailed explanations of materials within the document as well as implementation suggestions for further research and guidance in planning. The Appendix

also contains the reference material for the rest of the project, including bibliographies and contact information for relevant stakeholders and participants in this process to date.

This social-economic assessment package provides reference information, tools, and ideas that can be used throughout this forest planning process. It is also hoped to be useful for implementing the forest plans—including future decisions, actions, and projects. While the framework and materials were developed specifically for these three forests, they were designed to be used in other projects as well. It is hoped that state and local governments, tribes, private citizens, and interest groups will also use these tools to better understand the potential effects of proposed management actions on people, cultures, society, and economies.

